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A-ONE #0210 03/10/00

~ Mitnick Advises Feds! ~ People Are Talking! ~ Juno Sees Losses!
~ Building A 5K Web Page ~ PSX2 Sales Go Wild! ~ MS XBox Out Next!
~ More Internet Suffixes ~ Apple Sues iMac Clones ~ TAF Meeting News!
~ PSX2 Export Prohibited ~ States Still Push Tax! ~ Life With A Milan!

-* AMD Beats Intel To 1GHz Chip *-
-* Arizona Takes Lead In Internet Vote *-
-* Analysts Say Microsoft Might Settle Case *-

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->From the Editor’s Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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And here I was last week thinking that Spring had sprung! This week, we broke all kinds of records for warm temperatures - it was beautiful out! I’m definitely in a Spring-fever mood! I can’t wait, I’m ready!

Until next time...

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->A-ONE User Group Notes! - Meetings, Shows, and Info!
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TAF Meeting March 15th - Emulating ST on Macintosh

Itinerary for the March 15th. 2000 meeting of the Toronto Atari Federation....

Are you the proud owner of an Apple iMac, PowerBook, iBook, G3/G4 Tower or older PowerPC computer? Do you miss playing your old Atari ST games, or is there an application out there from your ST days that you just can’t find a replacement for? Want to amaze your other Mac buddies? Have you wondered about what all this fuss is about emulating older platforms on newer machines?

Well, tonight’s meeting may have the answers to these and other questions you may have - for we’ll be demonstrating the Atari ST emulator NoSTalgia. An amazing feat of programming, NoSTalgia allows you to run a wide variety of Atari software - including MIDI software - on your Macintosh. We’ll also be touching on other Mac emulators, including MagiCMac.

Yes, tonight will be an informative and fun night of demonstrations not only for Atari users, but for Mac users as well. Be sure to make time for this interesting seminar!

TORONTO ATARI FEDERATION meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month from Sept-June in the "Gold Room" of the North York Memorial Hall located in the lower or concourse level of the North York City Centre Library Building at 5110 Yonge Street (next to Mel Lastman Square) at Parkholme Avenue. Those coming by public transport can take the TTC Yonge Line north to North York Centre Station. $2 for non-members. Dues are $25 per year, and includes a subscription to the newsletter PHOENIX. Membership in TAF IS Atari support!

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"Life with a Milan PC in the USA"

By Fred Horvat
fmh@netzero.net

Part 1 of ?

Hello,

My name is Fred Horvat, I live in the USA and I am a self confessed Atari computer enthusiast. In 1998 when the Milan PC was released I thought, man, that would be a great Atari system to own. Hardware is up to-date with using industry standard PCI, ISA, memory, graphics card and more. This would be a great replacement for my trusty TT030.

When it was first released I checked around to see which U.S. dealers would be carrying and for how much. I contacted the normal bunch of Atari dealers that I was in contact with to see if they were going to carry it. Systems for Tomorrow (www.systemsfortomorrow.com), Chromagic (www.digistar.com/~jimcollins), and Homa Systems (www.magma.ca/~nima/) were unable or taking a wait and see approach at the time to carry the system.

Well late into 1998 no news on this side of the pond surfaced. Then Godfather Computers out of California posted on the Usenet that they were looking for people interested in the USA interested in the Milan. They wanted to get decent number of orders together and place one large order to save everyone some money on freight. I contacted Godfather Computer and added my name to the list. About a month later I received an E-mail back from Godfather Computers stating that there was enough interest in the machine in the USA and that 10 people responded stating that they would pre-pay to get a machine.

About 2 weeks later I get another E-mail stating that Milan Computer would not respond to about two months of E-mail or faxes in regards to sending a batch of about 12 machines to the USA. So due to the lack of interest on Milan Computer’s part Godfather Computers decided not to pursue getting the Milan PC anymore.

My urge to get one subsided to get one of these machines since there was only one way to get one, direct from overseas. Possible and possibly expensive too. I always kept checking the Milan Web Site (www.milan-computer.de) from time to time to see what was going on. Then Atari Computing ran an article in issue #11 about the Milan do it yourself motherboard kit. If I could just buy the motherboard and built the machine myself I figured I could save some money on the total cost of the machine and most importantly on freight from Europe.

I checked System Solutions Web Site (http://dialspace.dial.pipex.com/town/avenue/abr73/) but no direct information was given on the kit. I E-mailed System Solutions and the

price with the current exchange rate from British Pounds to U.S. Dollars was not to attractive at the time.

During 1999 I took a real interest in running MINT , Linux, or NetBSD on my spare TT030. My current setup of 4 Meg of ST RAM and 120 Meg hard drive did not look promising without an upgrade. I started pricing out the cost of an Aixit TT RAM card, larger hard drive, possibly a video card, plus I wanted an Ethernet card to connect into my Win98, Mac OS, and BeOS network at home. The TT RAM card, memory, and hard drive were no problem to find. The Ethernet and graphics cards where much tougher to find. I found a source in Holland that carried the Reibel Ethernet card but I did not turn up a source for a high resolution VME graphics card. I added up the cost of the upgrades and it did not seem too much, but enough for an old hobbyist machine.

Then I noticed something that happened in 1999. The Deutsche Mark started falling against the U.S. Dollar. Why? My best guess was because of Germany's participation in the new Euro Currency. I was tracking this via a link off the Currency Convert Link off of the MagiC Online Home Page http://bengy.atari-computer.com/.

While always checking the MagiC Online Web Site something else happened. MagiC was now supported on the Milan. I'm a very big fan of MagiC and just love running this on my TT030. Now my interest in getting a Milan was starting again.

To be continued...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING

compiled by Joe Mirando
jmirando@portone.com

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. For my intro this week, I'm not going to talk about anything strictly computer-related.

A very good friend of mine sent me a short note that made me stop dead in my tracks. This note consisted of little more than a URL and one line of text saying, "check this site out. It's something you'll like."

My interest aroused, I went to the site and, sure enough he was right.

The site is a fairly simple one, consisting of only a few graphics and a few lines of text. But it hit home as very few things ever have.

The site.... page, really... is a pitch to help feed the hungry. It shows a map of the world, and every few seconds one of the countries turns from white to black.

The text below the graphic says:

"Every 3.6 seconds someone dies of hunger. 3/4 of the deaths are children under 5. When a country dims on the map, it signifies a death

from hunger in that country. Click this button to make a free donation of food to hungry people around the world."

Once you click the button, you are taken to a page that basically says "thank you" and shows you a list of sponsors who donate each time someone clicks on that button.

Now, anyone who knows me knows that I've been a big Harry Chapin fan since the 70's. Remember Harry Chapin? Cat's in the Cradle? Taxi? W.O.L.D.? He was called the premier storyteller of his generation. And that's not too far from wrong. In my opinion, the mark of a good storyteller isn't just telling a good story, it's telling the bad ones too. And he sure did that! My wife used to tell me to remind her never to listen to Chapin when she was depressed. For myself, I find that these tunes actually help to lift me out of the occasional depression.

I can remember making the mistake of mentioning to him that I donated food to the local food share program during the holidays. For the next fifteen minutes I was 'treated' to Harry Chapin himself telling me that it simply wasn't enough. "People starve every day, not just during the holidays. With what you throw away in just one day, you could feed a family for a week! You've got to think about it every day because people starve every day. We can help, but we've got to make it a point to help. It doesn't have to be a lot, but you've got to do a little good all the time. You've got to do it because it's got to be done, not because it gives you a warm, fuzzy feeling or something..."

Now, this wasn't some big, hard hitting interview or do-good-er's roundtable discussion. It was during the intermission break of one of his concerts. During the intermissions, he would make himself available for autographs and to take donations for his pet project, WORLD HUNGER YEAR.

A few years later, I heard a story told by Harry Belafonte, in which Chapin stood below the balcony of Belafonte's hotel room and pressured him endlessly about doing benefit concerts for WORLD HUNGER YEAR. "C'mon Harry, one for us, one for the other guy!"

After that, I didn't feel too bad about being on the receiving end of that little speech.

WORLD HUNGER YEAR has been a bit farther from my mind these past few years as my own concerns have taken center stage... things tend to do that, don't they?... but while looking at this website, Chapin's catch-phrase leapt to the forefront of my mind...

"EVERY year is world hunger year."

So do some good and check out this URL. There's no catch, there's no cost, there's no down-side. Just go to:

http://www.thehungersite.com/

and click the button to tell these corporations that they're doing a good thing and that you want them to keep on doing it. Remember...

EVERY year is world hunger year.

Now let's get on to the feast of information available on the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
==========

'Freek Munniksma ' asks for help with the new CAB overlay:

"I have a problem with the latest versions of Dan Ackerman's CAB-OVL like the 1.40. CAB will not recognize these versions. I copy CAB-OVL into the modules folder and start up CAB, but in the info menu it doesn't show. The Olivier Booklage versions like 5.66 do show up in the info menu of CAB and are being recognized. Am I forgetting something here?"

Steve Hammond tells Freek:

"I had a similar problem, but with me it was Dan's former Ovl that keep being displayed in the CAB information screen. I just eliminated all the other "ovls" and the related INF and RSC files relating to interfacing CAB with the outside world and Dan's latest version then showed up. Not sure why this happened, but it did."

Peter West adds:

"I've just tried out Oliver Booklage's 5.6800 version with CAB, and that worked fine. I have 5 different overlays in my MODULES folder at present, all marked with the version number (or IConnect, which I can't get to dial). When I want to use one, I use a useful trick that Derryck Croker showed me: Copy the wanted one within the folder and when the OS complains of name duplication, just rename it to cab.ovl; you'll get another warning but OK that - and Bob's your uncle, as we say here :-)

Of Dan's overlays I have the Falcon030, 1.2706 and 1.2904 versions; I am not sure what these offer compared to Oliver's. Have not yet tried any later versions - but I have only just succeeded, after much help from Derryck, to get a good net connection, downloading files from Uwe Seimet's page.

Is there an easy way to find such downloads without having to look through all the folders in my cache? (I don't have an ftp client installed yet.)"

Sean Barbieri tells Peter:

"I had this problem with Iconnect stalling on the modem initialisation stage and have found that the new version (1.8) available from their website has stopped this problem. It now dials every time no problems. I use STinG most of the time but wanted to get this working anyway."

Karl Smith asks for information about audio recording on CDs:

"Does anyone know how I can copy my old '33's and '45's on to CD's?

What software will I need to sample them (some might need to be cleaned up as they are a bit old), then write them to CD, then be able to be played on a music CD player?

I have a STe (veloce) and a Falcon (1st), hoping to get a CD re-writer as soon as I drop on one at the right price. Where's the best place to get what's needed?"

Shiuming Lai tells Karl:

"You can buy a stand-alone CD recorder unit (hi-fi component type) but the "consumer" ones tend to have poor A/D:D/A conversion, and the professional units have price tags to match. In both cases, you have very limited functionality - can't use them as computer CD drives.

You need a Line Audio FAD 2/2 high-quality stereo A/D:D/A convertor unit and Jam Sample Clock (44.1KHz version). For recording (up to 8 tracks), SoundPool Audio Tracker. For cleaning up noise, SoundPool DeNoiser. For revitalizing dynamics (inevitable with analogue media), SoundPool Dynamite Multi-Dynamics Processor. For writing professional Red Book audio (suitable for use as mass duplication masters), SoundPool CDRecorder. For audio CDs that can simply be played on domestic CD players, Anodyne's CDWriter.

The SoundPool products are not cheap, and neither are the results you get from them. Very high quality and professional.

Forget the STe. There are no readily available audio recording solutions (for CD mastering, at least).

They (CD re-writers) are now very affordable anyway, with models from Yamaha and Plextor costing almost half what they did a year ago. Don't bother with very old second hand or very cheap stuff. These things are already amazingly affordable for what they do."

Steve Cornio asks a couple of questions about another one of my interests, Linux on an Atari:

"I'm using HD Driver 7.55 with a 4GB disk in my Falcon30. I formatted it 32MB, 500MB, 500MB, 500MB, 500MB, 1000MB, 32MB, and approximately 940MB. This gives me drives C thru J. I installed Linux68K using the last two partitions, one for swap and one for linux itself. When I used to do this with ICD Pro, the last two partitions would no longer be seen when in TOS mode. HD Driver still reserves I and J for these last two partitions but TOS can't see them. When I mount a Syquest cartridge, its partitions start at K. How can I get HD Driver to ignore these last two partitions?

A second question concerns HD Driver 7.8. I have tested the demo version and I noticed that in HDDRUTIL there is an item under Tools marked Bus Rescan. I assume that this rescans the SCSI bus. This is good because I am always changing cartridges in my 4 Syquest drives, 2 Syjets and 2 old 44MB drives. Is this function available within the CPX which comes with the commercial version of 7.8?"

The author of HD Driver, Dr. Uwe Seimet, tells Steve:

"HDDRIVER ignores any partitions that don't have one of the recognized partition types or the XHDI type RAW. So if these are LNX partitions HDDRIVER will ignore them unless you have configured HDDRIVER not to do so, e. g. because you want to use them with MiNT. Please refer to the manual for details.

The bus rescan doesn't influence HDDRIVER itself but only some software using the built-in SCSI Driver. It's not offered by the CPX but you can use the SCSI.CPX by Steffen Engel to do the same.

Regarding cartridges with a different number of partitions the removable media settings are important, not the bus rescan. Once again I recommend to refer to the manual for more information on these settings."

Mike Freeman asks about a problem with CAB and STinG:

"Recently, I've been running more and more often into this problem, and it is frustrating as heck. I click on a URL and CAB just starts counting down its timeouts until it hits 0. Sometimes on the second try it finally links up (when it does this, it is almost immediately instead of counting down a while). But often (and more often lately) it just will not link up and get the data. This is especially frustrating when sending forms, because not only will it not try a second time, but you always have to click on OK in the transaction failed box, and try it again. Recently, it's been so bad CAB won't load in any data at all from most sites, making web browsing completely impossible and my computer (even more) worthless as an web machine.

Has anyone had this problem? More importantly, has anyone overcome this problem? I've tried playing with mtu settings with no success. I've tried disabling concurrently-running programs with no success. This happens with every CAB.OVL and both CAB 1.5 and 2.7. Any ideas?"

Joe Villarreal tells Mike:

"You'll need to change some of the settings in Sting. I've changed the settings quite often in the past. ATM, it's been working very well and haven't changed much of anything in the past few months. Let me know in e-mail and I'll send you my Default.CFG and Dial.SCR files for Sting 1.22."

Paul Nurminen adds:

"Whenever CAB seems to be doing nothing like you mention, a simple tap on the ESC key usually gets it going again. Or if it does this when you've just clicked a link on an already open page, you can just "re-click" the link (which is equivalent to clicking STOP and then clicking the link again). Unfortunately, this _won't work_ when you're trying to send data in a form - you'll get the "transaction failed" box. But it works great when you're just 'pulling in pages'.

And of course, adjustments can be made to your STinG settings as well, although the timeout problem doesn't seem to be affected by them much in my experiences."

Well folks, that's it for this week. Make sure you check out that URL I mentioned. Go there every day and do a little good.

See ya next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - PSX2 Takes Japan! More XBox News!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""   NUON - Too Late? 'Dead or Alive 2'!
                                    Getting A B.A. In Quake?
                                    'Hot Shots Golf 2'! And much more!

->From the Editor’s Controller - Playin’ it like it is!
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The news for console gamers lately has simply been: WOW! The Dreamcast, now the PlayStation 2, the X-Box, the new Nintendo machine, and Nuon-enhanced machines to follow! This is certainly going to be an exciting year for gaming fans. I wish that I had the time and "disposable" income to be able to take advantage of these new "toys"! I’m hoping that over the next few months, we’ll see some articles and reviews of these new machines, and the fun that they will provide.

Until next time...

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->A-ONE’s Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Joy in Japan As Playstation2 Sales Begin

PlayStation2 fever swept Japan on Saturday as thousands of excited game fans who had braved the cold and queued through the night rushed to get their hands on Sony’s new dream machine as stores opened.

At 7 a.m., video game shops in Tokyo pulled up their shutters to reveal stacks of gleaming blue PlayStation2 boxes and let the eager but orderly crowds in to claim their consoles, one of the most hotly hyped electronic gadgets in history.

‘‘Cold, tired, excited," said U.S. air force enlisted man Dan Champion, describing his emotions as he emerged from one store clutching a box.

Many game fanatics, including some who traveled thousands of miles from Europe and North America, had camped out for two nights in Tokyo’s Akihabara electronics district to make sure they would be one of the first lucky owners.

The object of their desire, priced at around $360, is a console that many analysts say takes home entertainment to a new dimension with life-like animation and the capacity to play DVDs and surf the net.

Its ‘‘emotion engine" processor has been billed as creating film-like quality, enabling it to depict the most subtle images and movements from hair blowing in the wind to sparks flying from the undercarriage of speeding race cars.

‘‘The turnout is definitely above expectations. We’ve worked all night to ensure a smooth launch, but compared to Windows 95, when we had 500 to 600 customers lining up, this time seems to be four times as many," said

Matsuda Nobiyuki, a spokesman for Sofmap, a big electronics shop in Akihabara.

To ensure no one would be disappointed, customers were limited to one console each.

The launch of the PlayStation2 has been treated on a par with the Second Coming in game-mad Japan and television crews were on hand to give live coverage of the event.

‘‘I am the first Frenchman to buy a PlayStation (2)!" boasted Tom, who traveled from Paris to buy the console, as he displayed his prize.

‘‘Why would I come all the way here today? I just couldn’t miss it... But frankly I am exhausted, dead. Fifteen hours with no sleep, the cups of coffee...the jetlag."

Sony aims to sell a million PlayStation2s in the first two days and is betting heavily on the success of the new machine.

The original PlayStation, and the games that go with it are a high-profit haven for Japan’s leading high-tech firm, which already holds a dominant 70 percent share of the world game console market.

If the initial reaction of fans is any guide, it has little to worry about.

‘‘In gaming terms, this is up there with the invention of the steam engine," said Steven Kent, a video-game writer from Seattle who had queued through the night to be sure of buying the console.

Kent, currently writing a book on the history of gaming, said the U.S. launch would be even more spectacular as by that time there would be more games on the market.

‘‘The potential is unbelievable, there’s just so much you can do with this system...the U.S. launch will be unbelievable," he told Reuters.

PlayStation2 is due to be launched in the United States and Europe late this year.

Sony Sold Nearly One Million Playstation2’s

Sony Corp said on Monday it had sold 980,000 of its PlayStation2 video game consoles since the Saturday launch, nearly matching its sales target of one million for the first two days.

That is more than 10 times the sales scored by the original PlayStation console in the same period when it was launched five years ago, the company said in statement. The figures, however, included consoles sold over the Internet which had not yet been delivered to customers.

Sony’s shipments seemed to have fallen short of demand and it admitted that production was 10 days behind schedule due to a shortage of memory cards, which are used to store games.

Of 380,000 units sold online, only 120,000 had actually been delivered, the

company said, adding that the deliveries should be completed in two weeks.

Sony said it expected the memory card shortage problem to be resolved by mid-March and that it expected total PlayStation2 shipments to reach 1.4 million units by the end of the month. It had originally forecast shipments of 1.5 million by that time.

It also said it had shipped 1.3 million PlayStation2 games and that the console, which can play digital video discs, had boosted DVD sales with video stores having ordered double to quadruple their usual number of DVDs since Saturday.

Many analysts have said the console, priced at 39,800 yen ($370), takes home entertainment to a new dimension with life-like animation as well as the capacity to play DVDs and surf the net.

Its ‘‘emotion engine" processor has been billed as creating film-like quality, enabling it to depict the most subtle images and movements from hair blowing in the wind to sparks flying from the undercarriage of speeding race cars.

Sony is betting heavily on the success of the new machine. The original PlayStation, and the games that go with it are a high-profit haven for Japan’s leading high-tech firm, which already holds a dominant 70 percent share of the world game console market.

Export of PlayStation 2 Prohibited

Exporting Sony Corp.’s newly-released PlayStation 2 game console is prohibited without permission from Japan’s Trade Ministry, company and government officials said Wednesday.

The console and accompanying 8-megabyte memory cards are subject to controls under Japan’s Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade law because of high-powered encryption technology used in the system, Sony Computer Entertainment spokeswoman Yuko Takano said.

Takano said it was the first time a Sony game machine has fallen under the regulations, which typically apply to high-tech electronic equipment, sensors and computers.

In addition, PlayStation 2 was designed according to Japanese safety standards and may not function properly elsewhere, she said.

‘‘Using this product in countries other than Japan may lead to serious accidents due to voltage difference, etc.," a statement from Sony said.

Takano also said, however, that the system to be marketed overseas later this year will be produced for use in other countries.

The new game machine, released March 5, has stirred excitement in Japan for its use of cutting-edge technology, vivid graphics and Internet connectability.

Sony, which plans to release PlayStation 2 in the United States and Europe in autumn, will have to get a special permit from the Trade Ministry before doing so, ministry officials said.

Sony Denies PlayStation Memory Card Recall

Japanese electronics giant Sony Corp denied on Thursday it had encountered technical glitches in the memory cards of its new and wildly popular PlayStation2 video games console and would have to recall the product.

London-listed shares in Sony slipped as much as 3.2 percent to 27,200 yen after rumours published on the Internet suggested the company had encountered the problems.

Traders in London noted unusually heavy trade in the stock.

But a spokeswoman for San Francisco-based Sony Computer Entertainment (U.S.) dismissed the Internet talk as pure speculation.

‘‘We have not announced a recall of any kind. Of course we are always following any customer inquiries we get, but we really have no idea where this came from," the spokeswoman said.

Microsoft to Introduce Game Console

Microsoft Corp. is expected unveil a new video game system at a conference on Friday, one with the power of a high-end gaming system and the flexibility of a personal computer.

Sources close to the project, dubbed ‘‘Xbox" by company insiders, told The Associated Press Monday that the game consoles themselves would be based on the same microprocessors that power personal computers.

The devices, which would also contain hard drives and memory components similar to those of PCs, will also be Internet-compatible, allowing users to take part in multiplayer games with people around the country.

The sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the console and games would be ‘‘competitively priced," with the Nintendo 64, Sony PlayStation2 and Sega Dreamcast. The system is not likely to reach store shelves until 2001.

Microsoft declined to comment, other than to note that company chairman Bill Gates is to address the Game Developers Conference in San Jose, Calif., on Friday.

The San Jose Mercury News reported Monday that the game console would feature a 600 megahertz processor and 128 megabytes of random-access memory - features normally found on better-than-average home computers.

A company source said Microsoft discussed the Xbox with a number of independent game programmers and developers, and found interest to be high. Many developers have already written games to be run on the Windows operating system, a stripped-down version of which will power the Xbox.

Thus, few changes will be needed to move existing PC games to the Xbox. Microsoft officials think that will give them an advantage by having

established games as soon as the system is introduced to the public. It also will save developers time and money.

The introduction of a new gaming platform can be a risky business. Sega Enterprises Ltd. of Japan bombed when it introduced the Sega Saturn back in 1996, and was quickly overtaken by the original Sony PlayStation a year later. Only last fall, when Sega introduced its new Dreamcast machine, did the company make a comeback in the gaming market.

The Sega Dreamcast, which uses software developed jointly with Microsoft, currently retails for $199.99, with games costing anywhere from $29.99 to $49.99 each.

Sony's new PlayStation2, introduced Saturday in Japan, is selling for about $370, and has sold nearly 1 million copies so far, Sony says. Prices for the U.S. version, expected to be introduced in September, have not been set.

The PlayStation2 is the most advanced platform currently on the market. It has the ability to play audio CDs and DVDs, and link to the Internet for multiplayer games and basic World Wide Web access.

Nintendo's latest offering, the Nintendo 64, currently sells for less than $100, though the company is planning to release a high-tech successor in time for Christmas.

Gaming's Battle For Your Living Room

Microsoft readies itself to enter the $4 billion gaming market and go head-to-head in the living room with Sony, Nintendo and Sega.

It's the meeting of the gaming superpowers.

Microsoft Corp. has long eyed Sony Corp.'s dominance of the living-room gaming scene. On Friday at the Game Developers Conference in San Jose, Calif., however, Microsoft is expected to finally open hostilities against the PlayStation2 maker.

According to sources, Chairman and Chief Software Architect Bill Gates will use the conference to unveil Microsoft's Xbox -- a game console based in PC technology but with all the ease of use of console devices. Based on a high-powered PC, the Xbox, which the software giant hopes will lure living-room gamers, is expected to have Advanced Micro Devices Inc.'s Athlon processor, the latest NVidia GeForce graphics chip, 64MB of RAM, and a hard drive of between 4GB and 6GB, according to sources close to the deals.

The new gaming box launches Microsoft's attack on living-room rival Sony -- an attack that could net the winner a hefty slice of the $4 billion console gaming market. It also comes just as other consumer electronics makers are looking for ways to corner their share of the living-room market.

Both Sony and Microsoft are betting on game machines that are more: more technological wizardry delivering better graphics; more consumer features, such as the ability to play digital video disks; and more hooks into the Internet through analog, cable and DSL (digital subscriber line) modems.

’The slight risk that Sony runs with the PlayStation is confusing the consumer with a product that does too many things. Yet ... they are all things that the consumer understands: Gaming, DVD and the Internet’|Jeremy Schwartz, Forrester Research A mixed message or a transcendent battle plan? Rival Sega, whose Dreamcast game console is the latest rage in the United States, questions whether Sony is biting off too much with the PlayStation2.

"My question to Sony is, ’Who are you? What is this product going to be used for?’" said Charles Bellfield, marketing manager for Sega of America Inc. "Is the PS2 a game machine or a DVD player? Or is it a pipeline to the outside world?"

Valid questions, said Jeremy Schwartz, industry analyst with market watcher Forrester Research Inc., but Sony has a track record of success in this market. "The slight risk that Sony runs with the PlayStation is confusing the consumer with a product that does too many things," he said. "Yet, in (Sony’s) defense, they are all things that the consumer understands: Gaming, DVD and the Internet."

And to date, Sony has been extremely successful in delivering what the consumer wants. The PlayStation2 will boast better graphics than anything seen on a game machine, outperforming Sega’s successful offering -- the Dreamcast -- when it lands on U.S. shores this autumn.

Already, the PlayStation2 has hit Japan like a consumer tsunami, with just under 1 million units sold in less than two days. Sega, likewise, set records in the United States when the Dreamcast sold 500,000 units in two weeks.

With such numbers, most analysts don’t doubt that Sony will quickly dominate the market. "The fight will be for the No. 2 position," said Edward Williams, senior vice president and researcher at investment house Gerard Klauer Mattison & Co. "But we really can’t pick the horse that will be No. 2. It’s difficult to bet against Nintendo’s content, but it’s equally difficult to bet against Microsoft’s war chest."

"The Microsoft Xbox, the [Nintendo] Dolphin, and the PlayStation 2 could all be really good products," he said. "They are all coming from very strong -- financially -- companies."

Yet little has been heard from Nintendo since the original Dolphin announcement last year. In addition, without something to show off soon, previous developer allies may begin to cool relationships.

Nintendo should also be worried about getting developers on board. Already, Sony has gained unprecedented support for its new machine, garnering a large fraction of the future development dollars. While Sega expects to have 200 titles by the end of the year, the PlayStation2 could surpass that by early in 2001. And Microsoft has a built-in advantage with developers from its strong ties born from its domination of the PC industry.

"No matter how simple it is to develop to a game machine, the fact of the matter is that you have to dedicate a team," said Forrester’s Schwartz.

In a market that has had difficulty supporting three platforms, adding a fourth could turn the battle royal into a death match. The winners will be those platforms with the most developer support.

Nuon: Game Over Before It Began?

Analysts predict a grim end to a technology that once had hope of sneaking gaming features into DVD players everywhere.

It’s based on a simple idea: Build an installed base for a new gaming platform by adding gaming features to plain-vanilla DVD players.

That’s the thinking behind VM Labs Inc.’s Nuon technology, which has garnered support from consumer-appliance makers Toshiba and Samsung as well as such large content creators as Acclaim and GT Interactive.

Yet, a six-month delay and this year’s arrival of Sony’s PlayStation2 and Microsoft’s Xbox, both capable of playing DVDs, could put the skids on VM Labs’ simple plans.

Consumers interested in gaming will go with proven game technology, while those interested only in DVD will be hard to sell on the interactive features of Nuon, said Jeremy Schwartz, industry analyst with market watcher Forrester Research Inc.

"People are not going to know what to do with (the technology)," he said. "Unless (VM Labs) has made some major steps forward content-wise and technology-wise, they will be eclipsed by the PlayStation and the Xbox."

When Nuon first made its debut more than two years ago, he had been excited by the technology. "It was pretty powerful technology when we first saw it," Scwartz said. "But compared to the PlayStation2 now, it’s not that thrilling."

Eric Reichley, director of channel sales and marketing for VM Labs, is used to such talk. The company has been extremely quiet about its plans, he said, to keep its competitive edge. The company’s tight-lipped approach has hurt its image.

"There’s a lot of frustration because we can’t talk, but we do have a jump on everyone," said Reichley, who stressed that Sony and its PlayStation2 are not the company’s competitor -- yet.

For the company, even winning a fraction of the $4 billion video-game console market could mean the difference between life and death.

"In one way or another, everyone is going to put a DVD player, a game machine and an Internet device together," he said. "There are a lot of people who do not think of themselves as gamers who want to buy a DVD player but will not want a PlayStation2."

Those are the consumers that VM Labs hopes to lure into shelling out the extra $50 or $100 for a Nuon-capable player.

Already, Samsung announced its player would hit retail shelves before the end of April and VM Labs’ partner Toshiba plans to release a Nuon-capable player in this coming fall.

While Sony is luring hard-core gamers to its device, Reichley believes VM Labs will have a good chance of grabbing a large percentage of the rest. "Sony will have to wait a year to approach our market," he said. "because

they have to please the hard core gamers first and then they can change gears and switch to the mainstream player."

Still, Forrester’s Schwartz wonders if an unproven technology will be enough to lure buyer to the systems.

"Their marketing position is flawed now," he said. "They’d plan to put this in as a Trojan Horse in DVD players." Yet, with so many other high-powered choices, Nuon could, quite possibly, get buried by the other platform’s hype.

Unless VM Labs can break its vow of silence, the company could be looking at the end, Schwartz said. "The whole sort of marketing strategy had a fundamental problem and, of course, now they are fundamentally delayed."

Connectix Corporation Ships Connectix Virtual Game Station for Windows

Connectix Corporation Monday announced shipment of Connectix Virtual Game Station for Windows, a software program that enables many popular PlayStation games to run on Pentium II, Pentium III and Celeron or compatible computers.

At an introductory estimated street price of $29 in North America Connectix Virtual Game Station offers Windows users a cost-effective way to play the large installed base of PlayStation games on their existing personal computers. Connectix Virtual Game Station is available through most retail outlets in addition to the Connectix eStore.

Connectix Virtual Game Station comes with ready-to-use support for your keyboard. It also supports input devices such as game pads and joysticks. Regardless of the device used for game play -- keyboard, joystick, game pad or other game controller -- the user has the ability to define the functions associated with the various buttons and keys.

Says Roy McDonald, President and CEO of Connectix, ‘‘Connectix Virtual Game Station for Windows allows PC users to run some of the world’s most popular games right on their Windows PC. It is part of our goal to provide users the ability to run any software on their favorite platform. We believe that our customers will be pleased with the experience of using these games with Connectix Virtual Game Station on their PCs."

Currently, over 100 PlayStation games are compatible with Connectix Virtual Game Station. Limited support for PAL games is enabled in this version. Users should refer to the recommended games list prior to purchase. Connectix is working on a new version with increased support for PAL games. A list of Connectix recommended PlayStation games is posted on the Connectix website at www.virtualgamestation.com.

Hydro Thunder Speeds Onto PlayStation and Nintendo 64

Midway Home Entertainment Inc. Monday announced that Hydro Thunder for the PlayStation game console and Nintendo 64 are now available at retail.

Fresh on the heels of the hit arcade and the strong-selling Sega

Dreamcast versions, Hydro Thunder is the first in Midway’s Thunder series.

Since their respective launches in March and September, Hydro Thunder has been the dominant racing game in the arcade and on the Sega Dreamcast. The American Amusement Machine Association recently awarded the coin-op a Diamond sales award, the association’s highest accolade, for exceptional arcade performance.

According to NPD Group’s TRSTS data, the Dreamcast version of Hydro Thunder, launched at the platform debut, has sold more units than any other racing title on the platform. The game has generated tremendous critical praise, culminating in Hydro Thunder being awarded the No. 2 overall ranking in CBS’ 1999 video game ‘‘Toy Test."

Carrying this exceptional success forward, Midway is backing the launch of the PlayStation game console and Nintendo 64 versions of Hydro Thunder with an aggressive $3.5 million marketing campaign. Centered around television, the Hydro Thunder campaign includes ads that began airing on March 3, 2000 and will run throughout March on national cable channels including MTV, ESPN, TNT and BET, as well as local network television on the nationally syndicated Fox network.

With a multitude of high-performance super-boats and tracks to choose from, Hydro Thunder is the ultimate competitive super-boat racing game. Players ride through treacherous water courses with turbo-charged boosts and thrill-seeking jumps.

Both the PlayStation game console and Nintendo 64 versions of Hydro Thunder will be faithful to the original arcade game, with some key differences. The PlayStation version will feature Circuit Mode and Time Trial Mode options, and Nintendo 64 will support play for up to four players.

Once in the game, players choose from 13 boats and 11 visually stunning tracks to defy the rules of physics and conventional racing settings. 3D waves, hidden boosters and ‘‘Mighty Hull" technology are used to skillfully eliminate obstacles and competitors from one’s path.

‘‘Midway is unique in the industry for its ability to successfully transfer the fast-paced realism of its coin-op games onto game console systems," said Paula Cook, director of marketing at Midway Home Entertainment.

‘‘According to the January issue of Play Meter magazine, the five highest-grossing arcade racing games are all Midway products. As a result of our understanding of and success with the racing genre, we are developing a Thunder series of games.

‘‘These products will be uniquely over-the-top, defying conventions of gravity and sportsmanship in order to create the most intense and memorable racing experiences possible. This series begins with Hydro Thunder and highlights Midway’s industry position as the leader in larger-than-life racing."

Future Thunder products include 4 Wheel Thunder, slated for a May release on the Sega Dreamcast. Offroad Thunder, recently launched in arcade form, is being developed for consumer platform release in 2001.

ChuChu Rocket! Blasts Onto Sega Dreamcast as the First Console Title to Offer Multi-Player Online Gaming

Prepare for the premiere of addictive online console gaming! Sega of America, Inc. announced Tuesday the release of ‘‘ChuChu Rocket!," the first multiplayer online game for the 128-bit, Internet-ready Sega Dreamcast videogame console. ‘‘ChuChu Rocket!" is an adrenaline-paced action/puzzle game in which players must direct multitudes of mice into escape rockets while redirecting predatory cats into their opponents’ ships. Created by the world-renowned Sonic Team, ‘‘ChuChu Rocket!" is an addictive innovative game for the entire family that can be played at home or on the Internet via the Dreamcast Network. Gameplay options vary, allowing players to challenge friends offline, strangers online, or engage the single player mode with over a 100 different puzzles. Gamers can also design custom puzzles for unlimited replayability. The title will be available at retailers nationwide on March 7 for $29.95.

Since ‘‘ChuChu Rocket!" is the first console title to offer online multi-player gaming, players can now challenge friends around the world in real-time via the Dreamcast Network. By dialing into the Dreamcast Network, players can set up private rooms to play against friends, or meet in open rooms to go head-to-head against strangers as far away as Japan! Players in the US can chat and send e-mails to Japanese players. Pre-assigned taunts can also be sent during gameplay. When gamers log onto the Sega Dreamcast Network, they will enter a user name and password under which their scores and online ‘‘ChuChu Rocket!" stats are saved. Players can also post high scores for the competition to see. Thanks to the 56K modem-equipped Sega Dreamcast, getting online is a painless process and gamers can be dialed into the Dreamcast Network in a matter of minutes.

The frantic gameplay of ‘‘ChuChu Rocket!" must be seen to be understood. The objective is to lead as many mice as possible into a rocket, which will launch to safety at the end of each round. Each player has a color coded rocket into which they must direct mice. Whoever has the most mice in their rocket at the end of each round wins...but watch out, cats can wander into rockets or be guided into them by opponents, thereby depleted the saved mouse count by 1/3. Mice and cats constantly run in straight lines, but they can be directed by placing arrows on the screen. These arrows dictate turning points to lead cats and mice into or away from rockets. The skilled gamer will quickly learn to divide strategy between leading mice into their own rocket while directing cats into the their opponents’ ships.

Created by the award winning Sonic Team, ‘‘ChuChu Rocket!" incorporates familiar touches, such as bright colors, a catchy fun soundtrack, innovative gameplay, cute characters and multiple player options. This amalgamation makes ‘‘ChuChu Rocket!" another Sonic Team triumph! ‘‘ChuChu Rocket!," which marks the first action/puzzle game the Sonic Team has ever created, has redefined the puzzle genre with astounding and addictive results. Also, several hidden features have been included in the game for Sonic Team fans to enjoy after playing through some of the more difficult puzzles.

‘‘Sega understands that many players see the Internet as the future of gaming, and our company’s heritage has always been geared toward the fans," says Charles Bellfield, director of marketing communications, Sega of America. ‘‘Because both Sega and the Sonic Team are known for breaking the mold and taking gaming into new directions, it’s fitting that ‘ChuChu Rocket!’ marks the first multi-player online game for Sega Dreamcast."

Gameplay in ‘‘ChuChu Rocket!" is a constantly shifting format. As a roulette spins, random events are selected such as Mouse Mania, during

which hundreds of mice flood the screen and Slow Down, which causes every thing on the screen (including the music) to move at a lethargic pace. This stage is always welcome because it allows gamers a moment to exhale and assess the situation. In addition to head-to-head competition, ‘‘ChuChu Rocket!" has an equaling thrilling single-player mode. Over one hundred single player puzzles exist with varying missions. Gamers can also create their own puzzles to add unlimited replay value. Once a puzzle is created using the Puzzle Edit mode, it can be uploaded to the Dreamcast Network and downloaded by other gamers. ‘‘ChuChu Rocket!" is available nationwide today for $29.95.

Tecmo’s Highly Anticipated Dead or Alive 2 Video Game at Stores Beginning March 16

Dead or Alive 2, Tecmo’s much anticipated sequel to the highly popular fighting game for Sega Dreamcast, will be at U.S. retail outlets starting March 16.

Dead or Alive 2 features a unique ‘‘Tag Battle" mode for simultaneous multiple player participation and some of the most advanced 3-D polygon technology for realistic movie-like movement and environments.

The game pits character in graphically rich fighting locations ranging from a lush opera house to a spartan generator room, from a stunningly beautiful cathedral to a moving elevator cage and more.

Characters can fight on uneven surfaces and can be pushed through windows and from ledges to battle on in entirely new cinema-quality environments. For example, players can throw an opponent through an enormous stained glass cathedral window onto the concrete below, or off a cascading waterfall into a mist-filled river.

‘‘Aside from amazing graphics and sensational fighting action, perhaps the most unique feature is the ’Tag Battle’ mode," said John Inada, Tecmo’s marketing manager. ‘‘Up to four players can engage in a tag team competition, each controlling his own character separately."

‘‘Tag Battle" enables players to seamlessly and quickly summon a tag teammate from the perimeter of the fighting ring, and the right teammate can result in a flurry of crushing combination moves.

‘‘Tag Battle" offers feature-rich combinations, including: One player controlling two characters opposite computer controlled opponents; two players controlling tag teammates vs. computer controlled opponents; and four-player mode where tag teams battle each other.

Tecmo has added several new personalities to the returning cast of Dead or Alive characters, who have been further enhanced in fighting abilities and physical appearances (the game’s female characters are particularly well-known in gaming circles for their exceptional physiques.)

There are 12 female and male fighters capable of dozens of special and basic attacks, tag-team combos, reversals and throws. Between matches, the Cinema Mode lets players review each character’s personal story in chapter format.

Dead or Alive 2 also reprises the original game’s Danger Zone, in which

knocking an opponent down in certain areas of the fighting ring results in massive explosions that damage the attacked opponent. For example, one particular Danger Zone is located in a Bio Lab setting, where a large electric generator zaps opponents with a powerful surge of electricity.

Dead or Alive 2 carries a suggested retail price of $44.99.

Golf for the People: Hot Shots Golf 2 Takes Swing on Playstation

Sony Computer Entertainment America Tuesday announced the release of Hot Shots Golf 2, exclusively for the PlayStation game console. With a quick-paced, arcade style that captures the spirit and realism of one of the world's best-loved sports, Hot Shots Golf 2 builds upon the success of the original Hot Shots Golf, offering award-winning gameplay and impressive 3D graphics featuring all-new playable characters and golf courses.

Produced by Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. and developed by Clap Hanz Limited, Hot Shots Golf 2 adds to the bag full of features that made the original Hot Shots Golf a favorite among PlayStation and golf fans alike. With a wide range of skill levels and play modes, the game appeals to everyone from fledgling golfers to scratch players. Gamers will enjoy the intuitive gameplay and controls, from the realistic swing of the club and the ball's flight trajectory to the physics of the ball's landing. Six different modes including Match Play, Stroke Play, VS Mode, Training Mode, Nine Hole/Par 3 course, plus an all-new Tournament Mode, allow players to win upgraded golf gear as they compete through a full tour schedule.

''Hot Shots Golf 2 transforms the traditionally serious game of golf into a truly entertaining experience. From the wild and outrageous antics of the new characters, to the incredibly detailed 3D graphics, this really is a game that golfers and non-golfers will embrace and enjoy," said Ami Blaire, director, product marketing, Sony Computer Entertainment America. ''Although the game emphasizes quick and easy arcade-style action, Hot Shots Golf 2's realism will entrance the most serious golf fanatics into endless hours of gameplay." Gamers are able to earn up to 13 different playable characters that have been carefully designed with distinct abilities keeping players on the course for hours as they try to master each one. Adding to individual characters' personalities, each has his or her own humorous idle, par, bogey and eagle animations. There are seven completely different hazard-laden courses offering a challenge to golfers of all handicaps.

Additional Key Features of Hot Shots Golf 2:

- -- Quick set-ups in between shots and quick responses to swing commands without loading times
- -- Replay feature which allows players to check out awesome super shots and embarrassing blunders
- -- Multiple camera angles which catch all the action in real-life detail
- -- New caddy voices to taunt your buddies
- -- Multi-player gameplay allows for up to four players
- -- Take advantage of a computer-controlled caddy, or call your own shots by selecting your club, gauging your distance and picking your direction
- -- Challenging opponents to compete against in the VS Mode -- if victorious, acquire your opponent as your own player (earn up to 13 players in all)

3DO Ships Family Game Pack For PlayStation

The 3DO Company Monday announced that the Family Game Pack game for the PlayStation game console is available at retail outlets throughout North America and at online shopping sites. The Family Game Pack game is the only classic collection for the PlayStation game console to feature four gaming categories: board games, card games, solitaire games and casino games.

With over 25 games to choose from, every member of the family is sure to find their favorites. The Family Game Pack game includes 5 board games, including Checkers and Dominoes; 5 card games, like Spades and Old Maid; 5 solitaire games; and 11 casino games, including Blackjack, Slots and Video Poker. One- to two-player capability adds to the fun, and as players win they'll accrue points to use toward the wagering games. 3-D rendered environments with highly detailed and enhanced graphics, combined with a simple interface and an entertaining soundtrack, make the game appealing for the whole family.

Nintendo To Give Protective Gloves

Nintendo of America has agreed to provide protective gloves to owners of a video game blamed for cuts, blisters and other hand injuries.

The ‘‘Mario Party" game on the Nintendo 64 home game system can cause hand injury because players are encouraged to rapidly rotate a joy stick with a grooved tip, state Attorney General Eliot Spitzer said Wednesday.

Consumers report having to use the palms of their hands to rotate the joystick, he said.

Nintendo agreed to provide up to four protective gloves to each household of consumers owning the video game, Spitzer said.

The fingerless gloves have padded palms.

Nintendo spokeswoman Beth Llewelyn said the company had sold more than a million of the games since February 1999 and received about 90 complaints, none serious. She said it also included instructions on proper use of the joystick.

Nintendo is committing $80 million for the gloves and agreed to also provide $75,000 for the cost of the attorney general's investigation, Spitzer said.

How About A B.A. In Quake?

Educators to offer advanced degree in games. Sign of the time? Read on.

"Your homework is to play Quake and then write about it."

It sounds like an adolescent boy's dream come true, but this is no dream.

Next fall, students at the University of California at Irvine can begin taking courses in the university's newly announced Interdisciplinary Gaming Studies Program. It's the first step toward a "major" in gaming.

"Given the amount of money in the gaming industry, you don't really have the flexibility to take risks and do alternative stuff, to experiment more," said Robert Nideffer, an assistant professor at UC Irvine who heads the gaming program. "I think the university is about providing that kind of space."

The program incorporates courses in a variety of disciplines, including psychology, sociology, graphic design and human kinetics. The goal is to create students who are not only able to code and design games but also have an understanding of the societal impact and significance of this $7 billion industry.

"It really allows them to go into these industries with a more informed position," Nideffer said. "Hopefully that becomes attractive to potential employers, because you've got employees with a more interdisciplinary framework."

That kind of broad knowledge base is exactly what Paul Grace, vice president of software development at 3DO Co., a leading game manufacturer, says he is looking for in employees. During his 20 years in the gaming industry he's watched it develop from teams of two or three developers working together on a project to groups of 15 to 30 people. The larger number of people requires team members who are sensitive to the requirements of different aspects involved in creating a game.

As a gesture of support for the UC program, game-maker Alias/Wavefront has donated $1 million in software. Alias founder Mark Sylvester said he chose to make the donation because it's important to begin studying gaming and its impact on society. "With the students being exposed to these ideas, they're thinking about this as a whole experience," Sylvester said.

Ultimately, Nideffer believes studying "gaming" will be considered just as legitimate as majoring in film or television. Several other universities have begun to offer courses focusing on games, including the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and New York University, but UC Irvine is the first to take an interdisciplinary approach.

Like the rest of the high-tech industry, game manufacturers are currently facing a shortage of qualified workers. Carolyn Rauch, senior vice president of the Interactive Digital Software Association, said programs like the one being enacted at UC Irvine will help generate smart workers.

"It's a good thing for the industry," Rauch said. "It's really a reflection that video games have become a more important part of our culture."

Important, yes. Completely accepted? No -- at least not in Nideffer's family. Although his two daughters, ages 9 and 11, enjoy playing Donkey Kong 64 and Zelda: Ocarina of Time, Nideffer said neither is likely to major in gaming. Not that he'd object -- "but I don't know if their Mom would approve."

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AtariNews: On The Prowl
March 6, 2000

Welcome to the latest issue of AtariNews. The next couple of months will be great for the Jaguar with BattleSphere, Hyper Force, and Skyhammer on the way. Also CGExpo 2000 is coming up this summer and Galaga and Pac-Man by Atari are well into development. You can also now reach the AtariNews homepage at http://atarinews.atariansun.com

GET YOUR JAGUARS READY, BATTLESPHERE IS COMING!

It's official, the much anticipated BattleSphere for the Atari Jaguar is on its way. BattleSphere was developed by 4Play, and is being published by Scatologic Inc, a company 4Play recently merged with. BattleSphere includes several game play variations including pure classic arcade action to a networked multi-player deathmatch with up to 32 simultaneous players. Also, Scatologic has announced that all profits from the sale of BattleSphere will be donated to diabetes research. A special autographed copy of BattleSphere was also up for auction on eBay. The final bid price for the game is $1575. The list price for BattleSphere is $74.99 plus shipping. Find out more about the release of BattleSphere at this address:

http://www.best.com/~sebab/

You can also see the auction for BattleSphere here:

http://cgi.ebay.com/aw-cgi/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewItem&item=271778032

SONGBIRD NOW ACCEPTS ONLINE PAYMENTS THROUGH PAYPAL

Songbird Productions is now using PayPal to accept online orders. Using your Visa or Master Card, you can send payments to Songbird productions over the Internet. Signing up for PayPal is free, and your account will be credited for $10 that you can use for anything through PayPal just for signing up. Go to the address below for more information:

https://secure.paypal.com/refer/pal=forhan%40yahoo.com

JOYSTICKS COME TO THE JAGUAR

Team 13, a software and hardware development company, has some joystick products in development for the Jaguar. Team 13 has already released a joystick add-on for Jaguar controllers, where you can either buy it pre-built or get a do-it-yourself kit. This product places a joystick over a standard Jaguar controller dpad, and is great for people who don't have the time or money to build a joystick from scratch. Another Jaguar joystick product in development at Team 13 is a joystick made out of JAMMA arcade machine parts. Team 13 estimates development to be about 40% complete. One project that was also in development at Team 13, codenamed Project M, has been changed because the cost of this arcade quality joystick would be out of the price range for most consumers. The new plan is to build custom joysticks by request. Despite some website problems,

you can find more information about these and other projects by Team 13 at the address below:

http://www.darkknightgames.com/team13/news.htm

CGE 2000 STARTS JULY 29TH IN LAS VEGAS

Classic Gaming Expo 2000 is scheduled to take place at the Plaza Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas on July 29-30, 2000. The first guests to confirm are the "Father of Video games", Ralph Baer, and the Video game Journalism Pioneers, Arnie Katz, Bill Kunkel, & Joyce Worley. Visit the address below for more information

http://www.cgexpo.com/

THE MAKING OF ADVENTURE

On the Classic Gaming Expo website, Sign-ups are being accepted for the proposed Warren Robinett book, "The making of Adventure". This sign-up is to see if there would be enough interest in this book to publish it. This is a manuscript that Mr. Robinett had written some years ago, and it also discusses the creation of Rocky's Boots for the Apple computers. The book would be priced around $15. Go to the CGExpo website for more information.

http://www.cgexpo.com/news.html

MISSILE COMMAND FOR THE PC DEMO NOW AVAILABLE

Atari has recently released a demo of the PC version of their remake of the classic game Missile Command. The demo includes a few levels from two modes of game play--Classic, which plays like the original arcade hit, and Ultimate, where you go from city to city defending the world from alien invasion. You can get the demo from the address below:

ftp://internet.hasbrointeractive.com/anonftp/demos/MissileComDemo.exe

SCREENSHOTS OF FUTURE ATARI REMAKES

Two websites have released screenshots of games in development at Atari. Although neither game was originally an Atari game, both were licensed from Namco. Atari Gaming Headquarters has screenshots of the upcoming Galaga for the Sony Playstation. Classic Gamer Magazine has screenshots of the new version of Pac-Man for the PC.
Atari Gaming Headquarters:
http://www.atarihq.com

Classic Gaming Magazine:
http://www.classicgamer.com/

Send any comments or submissions for "AtariNews: On The Prowl" to:
Brian Gudzevich (Editor) at: atarinews@atariansun.com

Jaguar and Lynx Stuff From Go Atari - Come Visit Our Auction!

We are having another Lynx and Jaguar sale on ebay. Auction ends next Sunday with items closing every 5 minutes all day Sunday. Everything is

new in the original manufactures packaging. All items start at either $9.99 or $4.99. We are offering several items not usually found at auction.

Visit our ebay auction at :

http://cgi6.ebay.com/aw-cgi/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewListedItems&userid=goatari

To see the auctions in closing order:

http://cgi6.ebay.com/aw-cgi/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewListedItems&userid=goatari

Peter Curry Go Atari pcurry@goatari.com

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

AMD Beats Intel in Unveiling 1st Gigahertz Chip

Computer chip maker Advanced Micro Devices on Monday unveiled the first PC Processor running at a so-called ''clock speed" of one gigahertz, beating its far larger rival Intel Corp. in achieving a long-sought milestone in the PC industry.

Chip makers have long regarded the one-gigahertz threshold as a sort of Holy Grail in performance -- even though few PC users actually require such ultra-fast speeds. For more than 20 years, personal computer processors have measured their clock rate -- the raw measure of internal speed -- in millions of cycles per second.

AMD said it began shipments of its AMD Athlon processors running at one gigahertz, or one billion clock cycles per second, an announcement that had been widely anticipated. Previously, AMD's fastest processor was an 850-megahertz Athlon chip. Compaq Computer Corp. and Gateway Inc. will begin taking orders for PCs equipped with the new chips within days.

''Achieving production of the gigahertz processor is the chip industry's equivalent of breaking the sound barrier," Steve Lapinski, director of product marketing in Sunnyvale, Calif.-based AMD's computation products group, said on a conference call with reporters.

AMD's shares jumped 5 1/2 to 47 1/2 after the news, reaching a new 52-week high in active trading on the New York Stock Exchange. Intel lost 1 7/8 to 117 3/8 in heavy volume with over 13 million shares changing hands on the Nasdaq.

Nathan Brookwood, principal analyst at Insight 64, a consulting firm in Saratoga, Calif., said the first chip running at two megahertz was introduced in 1975. Prior to that, clock speeds were measured in kilohertz, or one thousand cycles per second.

‘‘It is a huge milestone," Brookwood said. ‘‘This is at least as big a deal as the millennium transition was to the calendar."

The world’s largest chip maker, Intel, is expected to follow with its own announcement on Wednesday, analysts said, but an Intel spokesman declined to be more specific about when the company would introduce a one gigahertz Pentium III chip.

‘‘We are going to continue by our own schedule and that is shortly," said Michael Sullivan, a spokesman for the Santa Clara, Calif.-based chip giant. ‘‘We demonstrated our Pentium III one gigahertz processor in February with systems from Dell, (Hewlett-Packard) and IBM. We have already begun shipping to our customers and will make the official introduction shortly."

AMD said it would immediately begin shipping its chips to its two lead partners, Houston-based Compaq Computer Corp. and Gateway Inc.of San Diego.

Compaq said on Monday it would sell computers with AMD’s one gigahertz chip at prices ranging from $2,000 to $3,300, with the average price around $2,499. Customers can begin placing orders on March 9, with expedited shipment putting the available computers in users hands within four or five days.

Gateway said prices for one gigahertz systems would start at $2,999. It will begin shipping products within eight to 10 days.

AMD also said it planned to begin shipping the high-speed chips to all other computer makers in April.

AMD priced its one gigahertz Athlon processors at $1,299 in 1,000 unit quantities. It also announced the availability of a 950 megahertz chip at $999 in 1,000-unit quantities, and 900 megahertz Athlon processors priced at $899 in 1,000-unit quantities.

In contrast, AMD’s 850 megahertz Athlon was priced at $849, the 800 megahertz at $599, the 750 megahertz at $489 and the 700 at $389, in quantities of 1,000, as of Feb. 28.

Analysts said the high price tag on the new chips would likely discourage many prospective buyers. They do not expect big volumes of one gigahertz systems for a couple of months.

‘‘They are really trying to scare away anyone who doesn’t want it pretty bad," said Linley Gwennap, principal analyst of The Linley Group in Mountain View, Calif. ‘‘From a consumer standpoint, it’s more of a mirage than a product. But certainly over time, as the companies get more experienced (producing the chips) they will be able to produce them in big volumes."

For the average computer user, Gwennap said there are very few applications that will need this kind of performance.

‘‘There are some professional editing systems or some kinds of big financial calculations, but 99 percent of consumers and 90 percent of business people are not going to require that kind of performance," Gwennap said.

Intel Ships Gigahertz Chip

Intel Corp. on Wednesday followed on the heels of its main rival Advanced Micro Devices Inc. in shipping a personal computer processor that achieved an industry milestone with a clock speed of 1 gigahertz, which processes 1 billion cycles per second.

Smaller rival AMD beat the Santa Clara, Calif.-based chip giant in announcing the 1 gigahertz mark, and it began shipping its own 1 gigahertz chip on Monday.

Analysts had forecast last week that AMD would try to beat Intel to the punch with the news, especially after word surfaced in recent weeks that Intel was likely to launch its 1 gigahertz chips on Wednesday.

As a measure of the symbolic significance of reaching what had long been seen by some as a computing Holy Grail, the new chips are hundreds of times faster than a distant ancestor, the first megahertz chip born about 25 years ago and clocking in at 2 megahertz, a speed of 2 million cycles per second.

But in an unusual commentary from Intel, the world’s largest chip maker said its 1 gigahertz Pentium III is about 15 percent faster than AMD’s 1 gigahertz Athlon chip. Intel said the 1 gigahertz AMD Athlon is actually equivalent in speed to its 800 megahertz Pentium III, because the Pentium III has a faster cache -- a dedicated section of main memory -- than AMD’s.

‘‘We didn’t get to be first with our news release but we are confident that we have the fastest product on the market," said Michael Sullivan, an Intel spokesman. He also noted that word began to leak out in the industry after Intel’s Developer Forum last month about its plans for its 1 gigahertz launch.

Intel said that its chip is faster than AMD’s because the L2, or Level 2, cache in its Pentium III family -- which is integrated into the processor and effectively acts as part of an assembly line for crunching data -- runs at the full speed of its processors. Intel said AMD’s cache, which is on a separate chip, runs at one-third of its processor’s clock speed, making for a slower data assembly line.

‘‘The issue is that there is a smaller Level 2 cache (in the Athlon), and the best analogy for it is someone advertised a studio apartment with a bathroom and the bathroom is outdoors," said Rick Doherty, director of the Envisioneering Group in Seaford, N.Y.

‘‘Everything looks kosher to us," he said, adding that he agrees with Intel’s claim. ‘‘It’s a little imbalanced on the AMD front."

AMD, for its part, said that it cannot perform a comparison test on Intel’s 1 gigahertz Pentium III because it cannot yet obtain a PC with the new chips.

‘‘We have had a difficult time getting a 1 gigahertz Pentium III in order to make a fair comparison," said an AMD spokesman.

No. 2 personal computer maker Dell Computer Corp. said it planned to ship a special edition Dell Dimension desktop computer featuring Intel’s 1 gigahertz processor. Compaq and Gateway said Monday that they would begin taking orders for personal computers equipped with the AMD 1 gigahertz

chip.

Intel also priced its 1 gigahertz processor at a $309 discount to AMD's. Intel priced its 1 gigahertz Pentium III at $990, in quantities of 1,000. AMD, on the other hand, priced its 1 gigahertz Athlon processor at $1,299 in quantities of 1,000.

Intel noted, however, that its new chips are available currently in limited quantities. Intel said it is targeting the so-called ''PC enthusiasts," who buy high-performance PCs for surfing media-rich Internet sites and running advanced applications such as digital photography, video editing, music, voice recognition and three-dimensional video games.

While AMD has compared its announcement of the 1 gigahertz chip to being the first man on the moon and the first to scale Mount Everest, Intel has played down the milestone.

''This is Moore's Law," said spokesman Sullivan, referring Intel co-founder Gordon Moore's prediction that the number of transistors on a semiconductor chip will double about every 18 to 24 months.

''This is Intel's manufacturing juggernaut in motion," said Charlie Glavin, an analyst at Credit Suisse First Boston. ''They are able to achieve this (processing power) off an existing volume production in five, soon to be six fabs (plants). ... Intel is able to produce a higher return on its invested equipment."

Glavin also noted that the launch of the 1 gigahertz Pentium III processor was one day shy of the six-year anniversary of the launch of Intel's first 100 megahertz Pentium chip.

Analysts Say Microsoft Could Settle Antitrust Case Soon

Microsoft Corp. could have a chance to soon settle the antitrust case brought against it by the U.S. Justice Department, a Wall Street analyst said on Tuesday after a briefing by the company's new chief financial officer.

''The feeling was there was a near-term opportunity to have this settled, some language being given that they wouldn't have any change in culture or structure," said Walter Winnitzki, a well-known software analyst with Chase Hambrecht & Quist.

''My sense was that there was something being thrown about (in the talks)," Winnitzki told Reuters after Microsoft Chief Financial Officer John Connors met analysts at the company's New York office.

The Redmond, Wash.-based software giant has been in closed-door talks with the Justice Department to reach a settlement in the government's case that says Microsoft abused a monopoly on PC operating systems to harm consumers and crush rivals.

Winnitzki's comments followed similar remarks made on Tuesday morning by respected Goldman Sachs analyst Rich Sherlund saying that Microsoft management appeared to be focused on settling the suit.

Microsoft shares rose 2 1/4 to end the day at 92 7/8, after rising as high

as 97 1/2 immediately following Sherlund’s research note.

Sherlund, who had a private meeting with Connors on Monday evening, said the financial helmsman was tight-lipped on Tuesday after Microsoft lawyers warned him not to reveal details of the talks, which are taking place behind closed doors.

‘‘His legal beat him up over my comments that it might be weeks, not months," referring to remarks he had made to his clients earlier on Tuesday about the timing of a possible settlement.

Other analysts emerged from the meeting with the sense that progress had been made in the settlement talks.

‘‘They were positive on a settlement, that there was some give and take on both sides," said one analyst who declined to be identified.

Apple Secures iMac Injunctions Against Rivals

Apple Computer Inc. said Wednesday it secured worldwide injunctions that prevent three companies from making and selling PCs that it contends are knock-offs of its popular iMac personal computers.

Apple said South Korea’s Daewoo Group agreed to stop marketing its E-Power computers after the U.S. District Court in San Jose, Calif., issued a preliminary injunction barring their sale.

Cupertino, Calif.-based Apple had filed lawsuits charging Daewoo, eMachines Inc., which is based in Irvine, Calif., and Japan’s K.K. Sotec with copying the design of the award-winning, multihued iMac line.

Since their launch in late 1998, the colorful, rounded iMacs have helped revive Apple’s once flagging fortunes, driving a 37 percent increase in the company’s 1999 revenues.

eMachines, which is partly owned by Korea’s Trigem Computer Co., agreed, after a similar preliminary injunction by the U.S. court in January, to stop selling the current version of its eOne computers by March 31, a spokeswoman for eMachines said.

eMachines, which is in the process of filing registration papers for an initial public stock offering, will launch a redesigned eOne at a later date, she said.

Apple also said it settled in January its iMac trade litigation with K.K. Sotec, which agreed to stop manufacturing, selling or exporting eOne personal computers. That settlement was reached after the Tokyo District Court issued a preliminary injunction against Sotec in September.

Officials at Daewoo and K.K. Sotec could not be reached for comment.

Arizona Makes History With Internet Voting

With the click of a computer mouse, Arizona Democrats made U.S. history on

Tuesday by becoming the first Americans to use the Internet to cast ballots in a legally binding election.

Election officials reported little trouble early on as Democrats statewide were allowed to jump online, log in to a special Web site, punch in their identification numbers and vote for their choice for the Democratic presidential candidate.

‘‘We think this is very important in the future of how elections are conducted," Cortland Coleman, the party’s interim executive director, told Reuters. ‘‘We’re setting an example for what we hope will happen across the country and the world."

Fifty Internet votes were cast in the first 20 minutes of virtual voting. About 1,000 Democrats had voted on the Web by 8 a.m. local time.

‘‘There are no major snafus that I know of right now," said William Taylor, sales vice president for Election.com, the Garden City, New York, company running the Internet election. "Everything is going smoothly."

Mary Rose Wilcox, a Maricopa County supervisor, kicked off the plan at 12:01 a.m. by casting the first ballot in an election that is being closely watched here and abroad for its potential implications. She voted for Vice President Al Gore.

The state’s 823,000 registered Democrats will be able to vote over the Internet for the next four days, with the newfangled polls closing at 11:59 p.m. on Friday. The more traditional polling sites will be open on Saturday for electronic and paper voting.

Officials hope that 100,000 party faithful will vote in this year’s election with the boost from the Internet, compared with about 12,800 people who voted during the last presidential preference election in 1996.

Finding a way to increase turnout -- especially from traditionally vote-shy Generation-Xers -- was one of several reasons cited for making a foray into these uncharted waters.

Officials said they also hoped to generate some excitement for the new method of voting and raise national awareness of their primary.

The Republican and Democratic primaries in Arizona are held on different days, and the start of the Democratic online vote coincided with ‘‘Super Tuesday," the biggest day of the 2000 presidential election campaign.

Arizona Republican Sen. John McCain has already won his party’s primary -- with voters casting their ballots the traditional way.

The Internet election attracted controversy on several fronts. A federal judge cleared the way for the election last week, turning down a request to stop Internet voting by the Voting Integrity Project of Arlington, Virginia.

The group filed a lawsuit on behalf of a Hispanic woman and an African-American man, charging the online plan discriminated against the poor and minorities, and branding Internet voting "a new millennium version of the literacy test."

The election follows a new Zogby America survey that found voters were not yet ready to quit going to the traditional polls.

The February poll of 1,208 adults showed that 66.1 percent of those surveyed thought that allowing Americans to cast Internet votes was a bad idea. Another 23.7 percent said it was a good idea and 10.2 percent were not sure.

But Mark Fleisher, state Democratic chairman, predicted that Internet voting would be common by the 2004 elections. ‘‘You’re going to see more people doing this, many more people," he said.

New King Novel Offered Only on Net

Stephen King, whose serialized novel ‘‘The Green Mile" was a salute to publishing’s past, is now embracing tomorrow’s technology by offering his latest work for distribution exclusively on the Internet.

‘‘Riding the Bullet," a 66-page tale that King describes as ‘‘a ghost story in the grand manner," will be available Tuesday as an ‘‘e-book," which buyers can download for $2.50 and read on a computer, personal organizer or dedicated e-book device.

The short story, a co-publication of Scribner and King’s Philtrum Press, will be electronically published through Simon & Schuster Online, which will make it available through Web sites of e-book manufacturers and online booksellers.

King completed ‘‘Riding the Bullet" while recuperating from near-fatal injuries after he was struck by a minivan last June while walking on the shoulder of a country road near his summer home in Lovell, Maine.

‘‘I’m curious to see what sort of response there is and whether or not this is the future," King said in a statement.

Some science fiction writers have experimented with cyberspace-only distribution of their work. But King, the author of more than 30 best-sellers, is the first in the top tier of book sales to give that method a try, industry officials said.

‘‘This is really the first effective market test," said Keith Loris, president of SoftLock.com, of Maynard, Mass., which provided the technology to download the book to retailers. ‘‘Up to now, this has been technology in search of a market."

King’s publisher said the e-book format bypasses the traditional yearlong publishing cycle.

‘‘What’s exciting is that we are able to go from Stephen King’s computer to the reader in a fraction of the print-book publishing arc," said Kate Tentler, vice president and publisher of Simon & Schuster Online, a division of Simon & Schuster Inc., which itself is part of Viacom Inc. (NYSE:VIA - news)

Ralph Vicinanza, King’s agent for foreign rights, came to Scribner with the idea of an original e-book. Vicinanza was instrumental in the publication in 1996 of ‘‘The Green Mile" as a six-part serial, a format popularized by 19th-century writers such as Dickens and Tolstoy.

Since then, John Grisham, whose legal thrillers such as ‘‘The Firm" put him in the same sales league as King, and Caleb Carr, author of ‘‘The Alienist," have opted to use the serial format.

Last year, King released a three-story collection, ‘‘Blood and Smoke," exclusively for audio. Vicinanza said the author likes to explore ways to break the mold and give his readers a sense of adventure.

Vicinanza said a short story, rather than a novel, was an appropriate vehicle for King’s first online work.

‘‘We’re dealing with a new technology here, and not many people are comfortable with the idea of reading an e-book. So we think to sort of get them used to it, it might be a good idea to do something short," he said.

Vicinanza said he hopes new technology will result in savings to the consumer by driving down production and distribution costs.

‘‘I don’t think that e-books will replace books," he said. ‘‘It’s a new format that will exist side-by-side with the traditional outlets for bookselling."

Juno Online Sees Losses As It Builds Customer Base

Juno Online Services Inc. sees its strategy of targeting both free and fee-paying customers as a winning formula, though it expects losses to widen in coming quarters amid a push to sign up users in both categories, company officials said on Monday.

New York-based Juno bills itself as the world’s largest provider of free Internet service, as well as ranking the No. 3 provider overall after America Online Inc. and EarthLink Inc. Juno is currently making a strong push to attract new customers while encouraging its free customers to sign up for the fee-based service.

It said targeting both free users and billable customers cut acquisition costs per user and lowered the company’s costs in comparison to its competitors’.

‘‘Every dollar can go after both free and billable customers," said Charles Ardai, Juno’s president and chief executive, speaking at a PaineWebber Internet conference in New York.

Juno’s costs for acquiring customers are $111 each, which Ardai said was much lower than the competition’s.

Ardai said Internet service providers had an historic market opportunity, with an estimated 100 million people expected to sign up for Internet service this year.

Juno is ready to launch a marketing campaign to attract those new customers, and as a result said it would expect losses widen during the next two to three quarters, said Richard Eaton, its chief financial officer.

To encourage greater usage in December, the company reduced its monthly service charge to $9.95 from $19.95.

While short-term losses will increase as the company spends to acquire customers and beef up its sales efforts, analysts are looking for revenues to double in each of the next several years, an expectation that Eaton said he backed.

Analysts on average expect the company to post a loss of $1.13 for its first quarter and a loss of $3.27 for fiscal 2000, according to data from First Call/Thomson Financial.

Billable customers receive enhanced customer service, the ability to restrict advertising that appears on their computer screens and greater opportunity to access the service.

Juno said it was the No. 1 free Internet service, with 2.3 million accounts in December, compared with 1.5 million accounts for NetZero Inc.

Jailed Hacker Sought for Advice

The government that imprisoned the world’s most infamous computer hacker for nearly five years sought his advice Thursday about how to keep its own networks safe from intruders.

Just weeks after his release from federal prison, an animated Kevin Mitnick advised senators against focusing too much on technical protections at the expense of simpler safeguards - such as making sure a company receptionist does not disclose passwords to sensitive systems.

Mitnick, 36, wearing a slightly ill-fitting navy suit and rocking gently in a witness chair, warned lawmakers about his favored technique of ‘‘social engineering," or deceiving others into believing he could be trusted. He told of duped victims at major corporations volunteering their passwords and even sending him secret software blueprints.

‘‘I was so successful in that line of attack that I rarely had to resort to a technical attack," Mitnick said. ‘‘Companies can spend millions of dollars toward technological protections and that’s wasted if somebody can basically call someone on the telephone and either convince them to do something on the computer that lowers the computer’s defenses or reveals the information they were seeking."

It was easy to imagine why Mitnick was so successful. The convicted felon disarmed Sen. Fred Thompson of Tennessee, chairman of the Government Affairs Committee, and the others with his apparent candor. He joked about his earliest days when a school teacher assigned him a computer project to capture passwords. ‘‘Of course, I got an A," Mitnick said to laughter.

When Sen. John Edwards, D-N.C., mentioned that he lives in Raleigh - where Mitnick was captured in his new apartment in 1995 after a three-year manhunt by the FBI - Mitnick deadpanned, ‘‘been there." Another senator, Susan Collins, R-Maine, empathized that Mitnick ‘‘paid a pretty heavy price for your crime."

Sen. Joseph Lieberman, D-Conn., known among colleagues for being unusually introspective, pressed Mitnick on his motives for hacking, asking what might serve as ‘‘the potential for deterring the next Kevin Mitnick."

‘‘My hacking activity actually was a quest for knowledge, the intellectual challenge, the thrill and the escape from reality," Mitnick answered. ‘‘It was kind of like somebody who chooses to gamble. I felt like an explorer in those computers." He insisted it wasn’t an addiction: ‘‘I’m not sure you could equate it to a physical addiction. I’d say it was a distinct preoccupation."

The committee is considering a wide-ranging bill, introduced last year, to require agencies to create anti-hacker programs and seek approval from the Office of Management and Budget that such plans are adequate.

Mitnick recounted deceiving employees by telephone from the Internal Revenue Service and Social Security Administration into disclosing confidential taxpayer information. That happened in 1992, he said, ‘‘which just so happens to be beyond the applicable statute of limitations" for federal computer crime laws.

Mitnick told Lieberman that hacking in the computer industry’s earliest days wasn’t routinely condemned as serious, saying the founders of Apple Computer Inc. - now personally worth hundreds of millions - described manipulating the nation’s telephone system decades ago.

‘‘The fork in that road went in different directions," said Lieberman, adding, ‘‘Maybe there’s still time. You’re young."

Mitnick, who can’t touch computers or even a cellular phone for the next three years, seemed comfortable with his infamy and notoriety. He endured an aversion to flying to travel to Washington. And as he testified, his media agent stood in the back corner of the room in rolled shirtsleeves.

‘‘I figured the United States of America was obviously my adversary for many years in this litigation," Mitnick said after the hearing, ‘‘but I figured despite all that if I can serve country, I’ll do it."

States Discuss Internet Tax Pact

A coalition of representatives from 28 states including Utah, Washington and Michigan met Wednesday in Denver and via teleconference to discuss ways to simplify their sales tax structures and cobble together a system for collecting sales taxes from online sales, said Frank Shafroth, director of state and federal relations at the National Governors’ Association.

Describing the changes that are being discussed as "extraordinary," Shafroth called Wednesday’s meeting "day one of moving forward" with efforts to collect taxes from online sales. He said even more states are interested in getting involved.

At issue are millions of dollars, and potentially more, that states are losing when people shop online instead of at their local store.

Technically, consumers who buy goods over the Internet are supposed to remit to their state treasuries taxes that are due from the sale. Not surprisingly, few people do.

The U.S. Department of Commerce this month reported that consumers spent $5.3 billion on e-commerce in the fourth quarter of 1999, or about 0.64

percent of the $821.2 billion in total retail sales estimated for the quarter.

But a Forrester Research study released last month predicts that e-commerce will grow to $184 billion by 2004. State and local officials believe that if states collect only small portions of what they are due in sales taxes, their treasuries will shrink and preclude them from paying for basic services, such as police protection and road building.

According to the Forrester study, states collected $140 million in sales taxes from online sales in 1999, but $525 million in unpaid taxes was left on the table.

Under discussion by states is a way to make it easier for them to collect taxes. First on the agenda, Shafroth said, is an effort to vastly simplify the system of sales taxes blanketing the country. Most experts estimate that there are about 7,500 different taxing jurisdictions in the country, and the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1992 that given the complexity of the sales tax structure, it would be too burdensome to ask retail businesses that sell remotely to consumers in other states - in 1992, the issue was catalogs - to act as tax collectors for all states where they sell products.

One method of tax collection now being considered by states is a plan that the National Governors' Association put together last year. It would involve setting up an independent "clearinghouse" that all states could use for tax collection. Businesses agreeing to use the service would contact the clearinghouse during online transactions. The clearinghouse would immediately tell each business how much tax to charge, based upon the consumer's location. The clearinghouse would then collect the tax and remit it back to the state where it was due.

The goal of the coalition of states, Shafroth said, is to "develop model legislation that would remove any burden from a remote vendor" in terms of tax collection.

ICANN May Add New Internet Suffixes

With Internet domain names ending in ".com" running short, the international organization responsible for Web addresses on Thursday considered allowing the use of new suffixes.

Increasing the supply of domain names could have far-reaching implications for Internet business and the protection of intellectual property rights. As choice domain names become scarce, some are being resold by entrepreneurs for large sums of money.

''There should be new generic top-level domain names," said Jonathan Weinberg, who heads one of two naming committees set up last year by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, or ICANN.

If ICANN, which functions as an Internet oversight board, decides to increase the range of Net addresses, suffixes such as ".info" and ".shop" could be added.

''Expanding the names will diminish the artificial scarcity of names, create opportunities for entities that have been shut out under the current

name structure and promote electronic commerce," Weinberg told the ICANN board of directors and some 300 participants who gathered for the organization’s two-day board meeting in Egypt.

Board member Esther Dyson said she expected the two committees to submit proposals to the organization’s 19 directors on Friday, but that no movement on the issue was expected before the next ICANN meeting in Japan in mid-July.

ICANN has been looking into the introduction of new names for more than a year. It has moved slowly as it grappled with questions about trademark ownership and other commercial implications.

Weinberg suggested ICANN start by introducing six to 10 new domain names, and then pause to evaluate. He said his committee, while agreeing on the need to add new domain names, had yet to reach a consensus on how to select them.

Mike Palage, speaking for an ICANN committee investigating commercial implications, said adequate trademark protection must be in place before new names are introduced.

Companies ‘‘are concerned that there will be a whole new round of cybersquatting, that big trademark owners then have to go out and fight court battles around the world," another ICANN director, Jonathan Cohen, said earlier this week. ‘‘The question is what, if any, protection can be offered."

The U.S. government is shifting administration of the domain-name system to ICANN, which was established in 1998.

As ICANN’s authority grows, questions about who controls it have arisen. The 19-member board is considering elections for nine of its spots this fall with indirect input from 6,000 Internet users who applied for free membership. But critics question the fairness of the representation and selection process.

So You Think You’re A Great Web Designer?

This won’t be a cakewalk: The winner of this geek-of-the-hill award will need to cram a Web page into 5K.

Web designers on the hunt for faster page downloads have a new challenge in front of them. A contest launched earlier this week asks designers to create a Web page coming in at only 5K.

Most pages on the Web are usually 80K to 150K. At larger companies with more expansive sites, the ideal size for a page is around 45K to 50K. The size of a page includes everything from HTML to graphics to plug-ins. The smaller the page, the faster it loads.

"Download time and speed is the ultimate goal for the Web," said contest judge Peter Merholz, who serves as the creative director at shopping advice site Epinions.com when he’s not working on his personal site, Peterme.com.

"I see this contest as making fun of that," Merholz said. "You’d never

really design for 5K."

The challenge presented by the contest has already generated positive response among the design community. Contest creator Steward Butterfield said he has already received more than 100 entries and expects several thousand before the judging begins. The deadline for entries is April 2. Winners will be announced May 1.

A panel of seven judges selected from the Web design community will evaluate entries based on size, aesthetic appeal, function and overall concept and originality.

The winner shouldn't go planning their retirement any time soon however. The prize for winning the contest is a modest $50, or 5,120 (5K) U.S. cents. As the contest rules say, "do it for the honor." But it's more than that, Butterfield said.

"There could be a little anti-establishment cheek to it," he said. "People are disaffected with doing corporate Web design. It's very much in the spirit of why people got into doing Web design in the first place."

Despite the tremendous focus on the arrival of high-speed bandwidth -- broadband -- Merholz was quick to point out that most people still access the Net via modem, and sites are forced to create pages that can be downloaded quickly and easily.

"There's some hullabaloo about broadband, but it's not reality yet," he said. "The low-tech is often still cool -- kind of like grunge design."

With the increase in the number of handheld devices and cellular phones that feature Internet content, many designers are already being forced to return to their roots to create low-bandwidth Web content. Butterfield said he plans to post contest entries so they can be used as guides for designers in the future.

"Designers will pull out all the stops to do something cool in that size, so there will be lots of examples people can learn from," he said.

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